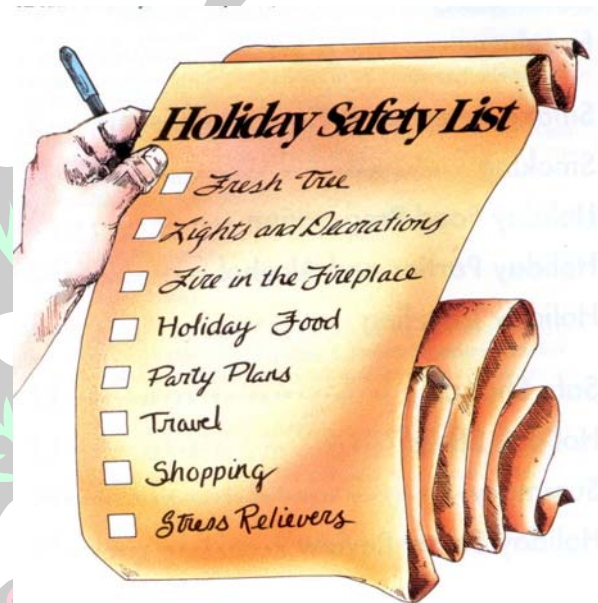


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USAG-AK HOLIDAY SAFETY KIT



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Tree and Light Safety

As the holidays draw near, decorative lighting and special effects become important components of the festive season. Christmas trees, in particular, are a traditional part of the season. Although they are special, trees pose a definite safety risk.



If you're using a natural tree this year, reduce the risk of a tree fire by taking the following precautions.

- ❑ Choose a freshly cut green tree, not one that has dried out through weeks of storage. If you are buying one from a tree lot, tap the trunk on the ground; if several needles fall off, it's too dry. Needles that bend and are not easily pulled off indicate a fresh tree. Consider a potted Christmas tree so you can plant it in your yard once the holidays are over.
- ❑ Before setting it up, cut two inches diagonally off the butt. The tree will draw water more easily from a fresh cut.
- ❑ Stand the tree in a tub or bucket of water and keep the tree trunk immersed to prevent the tree from drying out.
- ❑ Select a safe location for the tree, away from drapes and curtains and from drying and heating sources such as registers, radiators and television sets. Don't block doors or windows which might be used to escape in an emergency and never put a tree near a fireplace!
- ❑ Use a tree-stand with widespread legs for better balance and a large water reserve in which to immerse the tree butt. Check the water level every day and add more as

required.

- ❑ Check your Christmas lights for defects. Spread them out on a non-flammable surface before installing them. Make sure there are no broken bulbs, all electrical cords are free of cuts or frays and the plugs are in good condition.
- ❑ Do not overload electrical circuits.
- ❑ Do not use more than three sets of standard lights on each extension cord.
- ❑ Turn off decorative lights before you go to bed or leave home.
- ❑ Extension cords should never be placed under carpets or where they could be a tripping hazard.
- ❑ Don't leave the Christmas tree lights on if there is no one in the room.
- ❑ If the tree begins to lose an excessive amount of needles, remove it immediately.
- ❑ Never burn your tree in the fireplace!

These safety tips will help prevent your Christmas holiday plans from going up in smoke!

Candle Safety



The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) found residential fires sparked by candles are twice as likely to occur in December than any other month in the year.

These holiday-associated fires are coming at a time when home candle fires in general are at an all-time high. The NFPA reports that 11,600 home candle fires caused 156 deaths and \$171 million in property damage in 1997, the most recent year for which data is available.

Candles show no signs of losing their fashionable appeal. With their soft light, rich fragrances and cozy glow, they're trendier than ever this holiday season as shoppers stock up on pillars, columns, votives, and wax-filled containers. Their colors and scents enhance everyday life and evoke memories of special events.

However, if certain precautions are not taken by the consumer, candles can also become a factor in a chain of events that can result in unnecessary injury and even death.

According to the National Fire Protection Agency, candle fires account for 2.4% of all fires and result in 6% of total injuries from fires and 3% of all fatalities from fires. Due to the significant increased usage of candles, these figures have been increasing. Candles, of course, still rank far behind cigarettes, matches and lighters as the product of ignition in residential fires. For more information, please browse <http://www.candles.org/UseAndSafety/safety.htm>

The Hartford recommends:



Never leave burning candles unattended.



Place candles well away from curtains, bedding and other flammable materials.



Keep candles away from table decorations, trees and other greenery.



Don't place lighted candles in windows.



Don't use candles to decorate a tree.



Extinguish tapers when they are less than two inches tall.



Trim candle wicks to 1/4 inch.



Extinguish all candles before going to sleep.

Also, the National Candle Association provides more safety tips when burning candles at <http://www.candles.org/UseAndSafety/candlesafetytips.htm>.

Working In The Cold

For many people, working or playing in cold weather can be a positive experience. You may feel invigorated by the bracing air and feel like doing your work with more physical energy than usual. When it comes to leisure, cold weather offers many enjoyable activities whether it's skiing, skating, snowmobiling or ice fishing.

Unfortunately, all working or playing can turn negative if you are not dressed warmly



the enjoyable aspects of playing out in cold weather can be negative if you are not dressed warmly or dryly enough.

Over exposure to cold and dampness can cause your body temperature to lower. This condition is called hypothermia. You may have it when you start to shiver and experience chills, or find yourself unable to think or speak clearly. You may lose your coordination and quite possibly your consciousness.

You could also get frostbite which is when your body tissue freezes. Frostbite happens most frequently to your extremities like your feet and toes, fingers, face and nose. Symptoms include numbness and a white and waxy appearance to your skin.



There are many things you can do to dress properly for the cold:

- ❑ Dress in layers so you can remove or put on clothing according to the temperature.
- ❑ Always wear a warm hat on your head, this is the part of the body that loses heat the fastest. There are also liners you can wear to keep your head warm under a hard hat or other kinds of protective head gear. Consider wearing a knitted face mask to deflect cold and wind chill.
- ❑ Wear waterproof, insulated boots with several layers of socks, preferably cotton ones under wool. They enable your feet to breathe. When your socks or boot liners become wet, remove and replace them.
- ❑ Always wear warm gloves or mitts. Some gloves have liners which, if wet, should be removed and replaced.

In addition to dressing properly for cold conditions, it's important to eat regularly when you are out in the cold, especially foods high in carbohydrates and fats. Your body requires an enormous number of calories to shiver and keep warm. Avoid alcohol, contrary to the popular image of the St. Bernard dog delivering brandy to warm a frozen victim.

Try to keep moving while in the cold; don't be still. This helps to keep your body temperature up and circulation moving.

If you think you are experiencing symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite, get to a shelter right away and seek medical help.

When you work or play in the cold, it is a good idea to have a companion. What if you were to become injured or over-exposed to the cold and couldn't seek help yourself?

Remember: working or playing in cold weather can be a positive experience if you dress warmly and use common sense about protecting yourself.

Winter Weather Driving

Be prepared at all times for weather changes affecting your driving safety.

Weather changes can quickly alter road conditions and visibility. You can drive around a corner and suddenly find your vehicle skidding across invisible ice which has accumulated in a shaded area. You can be cruising along and wonder where the scenery went — it is shrouded by thick fog.

A good driver prepares himself for all driving conditions he might encounter. He maintains his vehicle to handle all types of weather. He also learns to anticipate driving conditions by being aware of weather changes.

Here are some reminders for winning against the weather:

- ❑ Tune in to radio and television reports describing road and weather conditions. That helicopter hovering over the freeway during morning rush hour can give you good information about icy areas to avoid.

- ❑ When planning a trip out of the local area, telephone ahead for highway and weather reports. You might be advised to carry chains to cross a mountain pass, or learn that a route is closed altogether.
- ❑ Equip your vehicle for the conditions you might drive through. Don't wait until the first snowfall to install your winter or all-season tires. It's safe to assume it is going to snow this winter, just like every winter before.



- ❑ Also switch to winter weight oil and winter coolant before freeze-up.
- ❑ Carry survival supplies in case you get stuck. Warm clothing, boots, gloves, quick energy food, matches and a candle are the minimum to carry in your vehicle in all seasons.
- ❑ Have the position of your headlights, tail lights and fog lights checked before the cold or rainy season. If they are too low, you won't see much; if they are too high, they can cause potentially dangerous glare for other drivers.
- ❑ Learn how your vehicle handles in rough weather conditions. Front wheel drive, rear wheel drive and all wheel drive vehicles each have a different "feel" to them. Learn how to correct a skid before it happens for real.

- ❑ Get used to your anti-lock brakes before you need them in an emergency. Read the owner's manual for your vehicle, which will explain you can hit them hard without pumping them if you need to stop suddenly.
- ❑ Wet weather can cause landslides, and avalanches are common hazards in many regions in the winter and spring. Obey all warnings about avoiding these areas.
- ❑ Sometimes road and weather conditions are too extreme to drive at all. If the highway patrol tells you to stay off the road because of a blizzard, do everyone a favor and obey.
- ❑ Flood warnings are other good reasons to stay home. Every year there are tragic reports of drivers who tried to drive across flooded roads and were drowned.
- ❑ On the other end of the weather scale, severely hot and dry weather poses dangers to travelers in the form of fires in forests and grasslands. Smoke reduces visibility for highway drivers. There is always the risk of being trapped by fire, especially when traveling off the main roads, so stay away from areas where fires are burning. Report fires immediately.



Wild weather adds to the challenge of driving safely. Be aware of weather patterns so you can stay off the road in extreme conditions. Watch continually for changes in road surfaces and visibility which accompany sudden weather changes.

Pre-Trip Checklist

A flat tire, a car crash, a dead battery, a skid ending in a snowbank — these are the sort of occurrences which make you wish you had an emergency kit on board.

An ordinary trip can turn into a nightmare if you find yourself stranded with a disabled vehicle. Check your vehicle today to make sure you are prepared to handle common roadside emergencies.

Your vehicle should have this equipment:

- ☐ Owner's manual.
- ☐ A working flashlight or trouble light.
- ☐ A spare tire in good shape, a tire jack and lug nut wrench.
- ☐ A tire pump or an inflatable sealing kit.
- ☐ A tire gauge.
- ☐ Tire chains.
- ☐ Emergency triangles or flares to warn other drivers of a breakdown or accident.
- ☐ Jumper cables and safety goggles.
- ☐ A dry chemical or multi-purpose fire extinguisher.
- ☐ A variety of screwdrivers including a large one with a flat blade.
- ☐ Pliers and wrenches.
- ☐ Spare fuses.
- ☐ Spare fanbelt.



- ☐ Spare headlight.
- ☐ Extra oil.
- ☐ Radiator coolant.
- ☐ Duct tape.
- ☐ Rags.
- ☐ A first aid kit.
- ☐ A shovel.
- ☐ Sand or salt in winter.
- ☐ A bucket or other container for water.
- ☐ Warm clothing, boots and gloves.
- ☐ Blankets.
- ☐ Matches or a lighter, and a candle.
- ☐ Spare keys.
- ☐ Cellular phone, citizen's band radio or at least coins for a pay phone.

Check this emergency equipment periodically to make sure the spare is still inflated, the trouble light or flashlight still works, and tools and equipment haven't been borrowed for other purposes.

Inspect your vehicle before every trip to determine if tires are in good condition and properly inflated. Also check lights including brake lights and turn signals. Make sure you have enough fuel and check levels of oil, coolant, transmission fluid and windshield cleaner. If you don't know how to do this, have your mechanic perform these checks.

Before you leave is the time to equip your vehicle for an emergency and in good condition to prevent a breakdown. If you don't check your vehicle, you may find yourself wishing you had.

Boost Your Battery Safely

Late for that appointment, you jump in your car, turn on the ignition and nothing happens. Then you notice you've left your headlights on. You can get your vehicle going again by jump-starting the battery. To do this you'll need a set of battery jumper cables and another vehicle with a working battery.

Properly administered, a jump start can get you on your way in no time. Jump-starting has its hazards, however. Explosive gases from a car battery can be set off by a spark caused by hooking up the cables incorrectly. The explosions can cause burns and eye injuries.

Follow these steps for safely jump-starting a battery:

- ❑ Park the vehicle with the good battery facing the disabled vehicle. Set the parking brake and keep the engine running.
- ❑ On the disabled vehicle, turn off the ignition and turn off all switches such as lights and radio. Set the parking brake.
- ❑ Open the hoods of both vehicles. If the dead battery has cell caps, remove them to allow gases to dissipate. Loosely cover the caps with a cloth.
- ❑ A battery has two terminals on the top. One is marked with a plus (+) sign meaning "positive" and the other with a minus (-) sign meaning "negative".

Take the jumper cables and connect one end of a cable to the positive terminal of the dead battery. Then connect the other end of the same cable to the positive terminal of the good battery. Next connect one end of the other cable to the negative terminal of the good battery. Finally, connect the other end of the second cable to a metal part of the car frame. Remember, it's positive to positive and negative to a metal part of the car frame.

¥ Ensure cables are clamped securely and are not touching any other part of the car. If they are touching anything else, there is danger of a spark which could set off an explosion.

¥ Start the disabled car. If it does not start, shut it off and check the cable connections before trying again.

¥ After it starts, turn off the other vehicle. Let the car with the battery trouble run for a few minutes before turning it off.

¥ Disconnect the cables in the reverse order to the way they were connected. Take the black cable clamp off the car frame first and the red cable clamp off the revived battery last.

It's a good idea to wear safety goggles when jump-starting a battery because of the danger of eye injury from an explosion. Store a pair of goggles with your jumper cables so you will always be prepared.

Control Your Wheels in Any Weather

Accidents involving skidding or bad weather conditions are preventable. You are responsible for keeping your vehicle under control no matter what the road or weather.

Bad weather doesn't cause accidents. Weather conditions create driving hazards. It is up to you, the driver, to know how you deal with them.

Professional drivers know bad weather and hazardous road surfaces mean it is time to adjust speed, or even get off the road until conditions improve.

Here are some reminders of how to drive safely in winter conditions:

- ❑ Before you start out, clear the entire windshield and all windows and mirrors. You need to be able to see as much as possible around you to avoid collisions.
- ❑ Keep brake and signal lights clear of ice and snow.
- ❑ Keep your eyes moving to be aware of the traffic situation all around you. Don't just concentrate on what is right in front of you. Scan the distance and glance frequently at your mirrors. If you receive information too late you will have to make a sudden move; watch and anticipate hazards.
- ❑ As a minimum, double the following distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you. Maintain as much free space around your vehicle as possible. Keep the sides and rear of your vehicle as clear of other vehicles as possible.

- ❑ Maintain communication with other drivers to make sure they see you and you understand one another's intentions. Use your lights, horn and even eye contact to communicate.
- ❑ Adjust your speed to road conditions. Allow more travel time.
- ❑ Pay attention constantly to the road conditions, which can vary even from one lane to the next.
- ❑ Build up your speed gradually before traveling uphill. Shift down smoothly, possibly before you start up. As you reach the top, be ready for unseen hazards such as a sudden downhill grade or a stalled vehicle.
- ❑ Use lower gears instead of brakes to travel down a steep hill.
- ❑ Avoid sudden steering movements. Be ready to steer smoothly as you approach a curve. Plan any lane changes well ahead of time.
- ❑ On icy roads, any driving maneuver can set off a skid. Braking, steering, accelerating and taking your foot off the accelerator can all result in a loss of control. Carry out these moves with a light touch, being continually aware of the vehicle's response.
- ❑ Brake correctly for the type of vehicle you are driving. For some braking systems, a quick, light pumping of the brakes is the way to stop on ice while maintaining steering control. Avoid locking the brakes. If you have air brakes, keep an eye on the air pressure. Anti-lock braking systems (ABS) should not be pumped. Check with the manufacturer for the correct operation of your braking system.

- ❑ Keep all your wheels moving to maintain control of your vehicle. Locked wheels can result in a jackknife.
- ❑ Strive to maintain traction at all times. You need positive contact with the road surface to control the direction and speed of travel. Drive moderately and gently. Avoid sudden braking, accelerating or turning.

Winter Sports

Stay warm and dry when you are enjoying winter sports this year. If you become chilled, particularly if your clothing is damp, you run the risk of hypothermia.

Hypothermia can be fatal. It occurs when the body's core temperature drops. Normally, the body maintains a constant inner temperature in spite of outside circumstances. Extreme chilling can interfere with the body's temperature control mechanism. When the internal temperature drops, damage begins to occur to the body's organs, including the brain. A coma or death can result.

Hypothermia is a common cause of death when a person falls into cold water. In winter conditions, hypothermia can result from even a brief immersion into water. Wet or damp clothing, or a cold wind, can also result in a dangerous lowering of the body's temperature.

Follow these guidelines to prevent hypothermia during winter outdoor activities:

- ❑ Dress warmly in layers of clothing which can be added or removed as the temperature changes. Dressing too

warmly, however, can also cause hypothermia if a person gets sweaty and then chilled.

- ❑ Much of the body's heat loss is from the head. Cover your head, hands and feet.
- ❑ Stay dry. Carry extra socks, gloves and other clothing if there is a chance of your clothing getting wet.
- ❑ Carry a lighter or matches and a candle so you can start a fire if you are stranded.
- ❑ Tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return so you can be rescued if something goes wrong. Stick to trails when skiing or hiking.
- ❑ Be prepared for winter survival when you set out on a motor vehicle trip. Make sure the vehicle is adequately fueled and in good condition for winter travel. Carry warm clothing and a well stocked survival kit.
- ❑ You and your companions should keep an eye on one another for signs of hypothermia excessive shivering, drowsiness and slurred speech. In severe cases, the person will lose consciousness.
- ❑ Treat hypothermia by getting the victim warm and dry as soon as possible. Build a fire and remove wet clothing.
- ❑ Get the victim to medical help immediately. This is crucial in the case of severe hypothermia, such as that caused by falling into water. Be careful moving the person because rough handling can disrupt heart rhythms. Do not rub the person's skin in an attempt to increase circulation.

While you are enjoying outdoor winter activities stay warm and dry to avoid hypothermia.

Sled Safety

Whizzing down a hill (at what feels like) a million miles an hour can be a great time - as long as you're sledding safely. When you grab your sled, make sure it's sturdy and that it's one you can really steer. The handholds should be easy to



grab, and the seat of the sled should be padded. **Never** use homemade sleds like garbage-can lids, plastic bags, or pool floats - these are dangerous and you may lose control while you're sledding. Also, never use a sled that has any sharp, jagged edges or broken parts (this might happen if you're using an old sled).

Don't forget about what you're wearing when you get ready to sled! It's especially important to wear gloves or mittens and boots while you're on the sled because in addition to keeping you warm, they can help prevent you from injuring your hands and feet. Wearing a bike helmet is also a good habit to get into - doctors say it's a great way to protect your head while you're sledding.

When you're picking your sledding spot, it's best to have an adult check it first to make sure it's OK. Hills designated for sledding are always a good bet - they can be safer than private areas like backyards. (Having an adult around **while** everyone is sledding is a very good idea, too.)

Make sure the hill isn't too steep and that it's covered with packed snow, not ice. The hill must not end anywhere near cars on the road. **This is very important.** If it's a new hill you're trying out and you've never been to the bottom, you might want to walk it first just to be sure. If you're sledding down and suddenly discover that the hill ends in traffic, it would be pretty hard to slow down in a hurry! Next, make sure that your hill has no obstacles - ones you can see and ones you **can't** see. Ones you can see are easy to spot, like

trees and shrubs. But ones that aren't so easy to spot, like snow-covered rocks or tree stumps, can sometimes also get in the way of a sled. Finally, check to make sure that the hill is well-lit. Because it can start to get dark early in the day in winter, you'll need lights to sled safely.

You're at the top of the hill, ready to fly? If you're sledding with a friend, make sure that you don't go over the weight limit - look at the label on the sled for the number of pounds it will hold. If everybody has his or her own sled and is taking turns sledding down the hill, make sure the person sledding before you is well out of the way before you take off. And whether you're on the sled by yourself or with pals, you always want to be sitting up, not lying down. Lying flat puts your body at greater risk for injuries if you lose control and flip out. And finally, there is only one kind of energy that's right for moving a sled: kid power! **Never** ride on a sled that's being pulled by a car, truck, or snowmobile.

Ski Time (and Snowboarding, Too)

Before you hit the slopes to ski or snowboard, you've got to make sure you have the right equipment - **and** that it fits you right. Many kids have problems because the equipment they use is too big for them; it may have belonged to an older brother or sister and they are hoping that they can "grow into it." This is a big mistake: skis and snowboards that are too big make it hard to turn and keep control. The same goes for boots and bindings - make sure these are the right size for your feet before getting on the slopes, and you'll have an easier time out there. Ski boots that are designed just for kids are a good bet because they are more flexible than boots for adults, and they have buckles that are easier to manage, too - making it quicker for you to get skiing!

Some sports like skiing and snowboarding also call for special kinds of protection that you may not need for a plain old snowball fight or regular snowman-building session.

When you're on the slopes, you'll need to wear goggles to protect your eyes from bright sunlight and objects that could get in the way and poke you in the eye (like tree branches). And if you're going to snowboard, you also need to wear a helmet, kneepads, and elbow pads, just as if you were inline skating. Some beginner snowboarders even wear pads on their behinds to protect them during falls while they are learning!



Speaking of learning, it's a good idea to take at least one skiing or snowboarding lesson before you take off. Having an instructor show you the ropes means you'll be a lot less dangerous out there - to yourself and to other people! And knowing the basics means you'll have a good starting point - you'll know how to stop and turn when you need to.

When you finally hit the slopes, **an adult must be close by**. Choose trails that you know you can handle and that match your abilities - if you're in doubt, it's always safer to start with easier slopes and move on to harder ones later. Don't ski or snowboard too fast, and don't goof around or go out of control on purpose. Always watch out for other people on the slopes - keep your head up all the time and look all around you. And when it's time to get on the lift to go back up, get on and off it carefully.

Winter sports let you have tons of fun while getting lots of exercise and seeing your own breath! By taking precautions and playing it safe, you can enjoy yourself all winter long.

The next time you grab that sled, strap on those skis, lace up those ice skates, or wax your snowboard, remember to think about what you know about being safe in the snow!

Wood Stoves and Fireplaces

While fireplaces are usually considered a decorative alternative, the use of a wood stove in the home has become quite a popular choice as the main source of heat. And while the fireplace may cut down on heating bills, keep in mind you are still dealing with fire. And fire can be deadly.

The most immediate hazards of a fireplace or wood stove are these:

- ❑ Fire may escape directly, in the form of hot coals or sparks;
- ❑ Radiant heat may be great enough to ignite nearby combustible materials;
- ❑ Flammable residues in the chimney may catch fire and spread to
- ❑ adjacent wood framing or to the roof.

The benefits of stoves and fireplaces can be realized in a safe home environment only through proper installation and regular maintenance.

If you plan to install or alter a stove or a fireplace, the project must be carefully carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and at the same time meet fire prevention or building code regulations of the region where you live. Find out what the building codes are in your area before you begin installations of any kind.

Usually fire codes provide specific instructions for stove placement. It is important to place the appliance a safe distance between the fire and nearby walls as wood can ignite at temperatures as low as 200 degrees F which is much less than the 800 degrees F temperature radiated by some stoves! Most codes require protective shields behind and beneath a stove and its flue to dissipate heat before it reaches combustible wall or floor materials. Most codes also specify the thickness of the masonry in a fireplace and chimney and the amount of air space that is required between the masonry and combustible interior walls.

Regular inspection, cleaning and maintenance are the best insurance against chimney fires and fires resulting from a damaged stove or flue. Thoroughly check the entire system before lighting the first fire of the season and repeat inspections on a regular basis every month or so.

Safety Tips for Stoves and Fireplaces:

- ❑ Use proper accessories for your wood burning system. Cradle shaped grates will keep burning logs from falling or rolling beyond the firebox opening.
- ❑ A metal container provides safe transport of ashes, which may contain hot coals. Store them in a safe place outdoors for at least 24 hours before discarding them.
- ❑ Every fireplace requires a close-fitting screen or glass doors to prevent sparks and hot coals from popping out.
- ❑ Pay attention to the fire itself. Never allow a stove to become so hot the metal glows. Heat this intense can cause dangerous cracks.
- ❑ There must be a sufficient supply of fresh air through outside ducts to ensure good combustion in the fireplace.

- ❑ Don't burn trash, plastic, Christmas trees, wrapping paper or anything that provides a sudden, intense flame.
- ❑ If you do have a chimney fire, cut off the chimney's air supply to starve the fire and call your fire department.
- ❑ Keep a fire extinguisher handy to the fireplace or stove and be trained in its use. A fire extinguisher will not help if you don't know how to use it.
- ❑ Burn only the fuels for which a stove is designed. Avoid any substance that could increase the heat of the fire, starter fluids, coal, cardboard and especially trash such as Christmas tree boughs and plastic wrappings.
- ❑ Never store extra firewood so close to the flames it might ignite outside the firebox.

If a fire does break out you can ensure an early warning with properly installed smoke detectors.

Fireplaces and wood stoves are great alternatives for heating. Just make sure you are aware and can handle the possible dangers associated with them.

Space Heater Safety Tips

Important tips about using space heaters.

- ❑ Use only the fuel recommended by the heater's manufacturer. Never use gasoline in a space heater. Kerosene is crystal clear, never yellow in color.
- ❑ Fill the heater outdoors. Do not overfill. Do not refuel the heater while it is hot. Operate the space heater on a drip pan to contain spills.
- ❑ Keep clothing, furniture, draperies and carpeting at least 3 feet away from the space heater. Keep a multipurpose dry chemical fire extinguisher handy.

For electric space heaters, the fire department has these safety rules:

- ❑ Use only electric heaters equipped with a thermostat or an automatic shut-off.
- ❑ Again, keep all combustible materials at least 3 feet away.
- ❑ Never leave any space heater unattended or use one while you're sleeping.
- ❑ Make sure your home is equipped with smoke detectors with fresh batteries in them.

Holiday Traffic

As the holiday season draws closer, there will invariably be a significant increase in traffic. Add to these conditions the stress of holiday shopping and the numerous construction sites around major expressways here in San Antonio, and the circumstances for problems escalates tremendously.

FACTS

It's a fact: seat belts, when properly worn, save lives.

U.S. Department of Transportation statistics indicate about 15,000 lives could have been saved last year if every front passenger had buckled up.

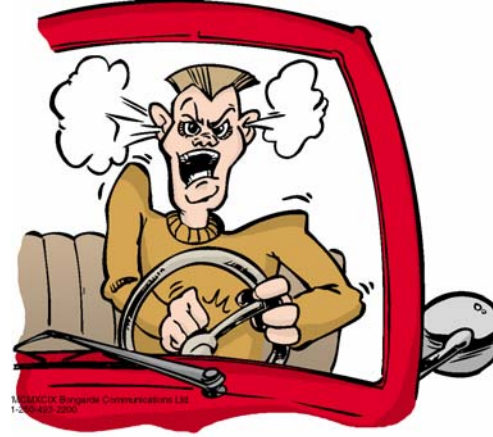
Stay Safe on the Road With Proper Attitude

An article in Roadsmart, a publication of the Amoco Motor Club, says that one approach to safe driving is to maintain the proper attitude, especially when it comes to traffic factors beyond your control. Here are five suggestions to help you keep calm and reduce your chances of a traffic incident:

🚗 It sounds a little vengeful, but if you see drivers who switch lanes without using signals, speed excessively, and drive recklessly in general, try to remember the police probably will catch them eventually. Don't allow yourself to

get uptight about others' driving habits or try to get even with them on the road.

🚗 If you're stuck in traffic, remember other drivers around you probably have the same problems you have; they may be



late for an appointment, too. This set of circumstances is not a plot against you.

🚗 Be polite on the road. It's one way to avoid possible hostility and violence from other drivers.

🚗 Try to take an alternate route to work every once in a while. It can perk you up and keep you alert at the wheel. 🚗 While most of us basically are considerate drivers, we all make occasional mistakes; we forget to use a turn signal or we unintentionally cut someone off. Find a way to make an apologetic gesture to the other driver to help diffuse any anger you might have caused.



Driver Fatigue

It's one of the most unnerving experiences in driving: You've been on the road a while. The highway seems endless -- long, smooth, monotonous. The car interior is warm. You're tired. The radio isn't holding your attention, and neither is the driving. You stare straight ahead, at miles and miles of road, as you start to feel your shoulders sag, and your eyes slowly ... start to ... close.

Abruptly, you open your eyes, jerk up in your seat. You've started to drift out of your lane, or maybe even off the road. You steer your car back into the lane, take a few deep breaths, and realize, fearfully, what just happened. You were asleep.


Fatigue on the road can be a killer. It happens frequently on long drives, especially long night drives. You may have recognized some warning signs of fatigue in the foregoing scenario. Other signs of fatigue include back tension, burning eyes, shallow breathing, inattentiveness, and any kind of erratic driving, such as drifting, abnormal speed, tailgating, or failure to obey traffic signs.


The single greatest cause of fatigue is alcohol consumption. Alcohol is a depressant, and a driver doesn't have to be drunk to fall asleep at the wheel. Even one drink can be enough to induce fatigue.


Another culprit is the nature of modern highway driving. Most car interiors have comfortable, cushioned seats in quiet, carpeted, temperature-regulated environments. Many vehicles have "cruise control." Most major roads have been engineered to eliminate sharp curves, hills and bumps. Ironically, these designs for comfort contribute to falling asleep at the wheel.


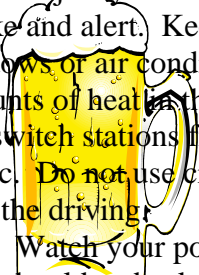
Additionally, dull landscapes, the droning of tires and engines, and the repetitive patterns of oncoming headlights, trees, poles and white lines can lead to a dangerous, trance-like state known as "highway hypnosis," which deadens drivers' senses and slows their reaction time.


Fatigue behind the wheel is a very real danger, even if you've never experienced it firsthand. The National Safety Council offers these tips for staying awake while you're driving:


 An obvious cause of fatigue is lack of sleep. If you haven't received seven or eight hours of sleep the night before a trip, you're courting fatigue. Get enough rest. Don't start a trip late in the day. Long-distance driving is hard work, and you need to be fresh and alert.


 If possible, don't drive alone. Passengers can take turns driving and also serve as conversation partners to keep you awake.


 Avoid long drives at night. The glare of lights, both on your dashboard and outside your car, increases the danger of highway hypnosis.


 Adjust your car's environment so that it helps keep you awake and alert. Keep the temperature cool, with open windows or air conditioning in the summer and frugal amounts of heat in the winter. Turn the radio volume up, and switch stations frequently, but avoid soft, sleep-inducing music.  Do not use cruise control; keep your body involved with the driving.


 Watch your posture. Drive with your head up and your shoulders back. Tuck your buttocks against the seat back. Legs should not be fully extended, but flexed at about a 45 degree angle.

 Take frequent breaks. At least every two hours, stop at a gas station, restaurant or rest stop. Get out of the car, walk around, even jog or do calisthenics. Exercise fights fatigue.

 In addition to exercise breaks, stop for light meals and snacks. Avoid alcohol entirely.

 Don't allow your eyes to become fatigued or hypnotized. Wear sunglasses to fight glare (but never wear sunglasses at night).

 Break the monotony. Turn the radio on for a while, then off. Vary speed levels. Chew gum, stretch your legs, slap your thighs, talk to yourself, or sing. Keep your eyes moving.

 If anti-fatigue measures fail, and you start noticing the danger signs of fatigue, then there is only one solution: Sleep! If no motels or rest areas are in sight, pull off a safe

distance from the road and take a nap. Even 20 minutes of sleep might refresh you enough to keep going for a bit. Be careful in pulling off the road, though. Parking your car on a shoulder makes it vulnerable to being hit by other fatigued or impaired drivers. If you pull off the road, pull far off the road, preferably at a wayside. Keep your doors locked.

Safe driving demands your full attention. If you feel your eyelids getting heavy, then your next actions may not simply determine whether you'll stay awake. They might determine whether you'll stay alive.

Myths and Facts About Alcohol & Driving.

Myth: Coffee can sober up someone who has had too much to drink.

Fact: Only time sobers. It takes about one hour to oxidize each drink.

Myth: Hard liquor is more intoxicating than beer or wine.

Fact: A 12-ounce can of beer, a five-ounce glass of wine, and a 12-ounce wine cooler contain the same amount of alcohol and the same intoxication potential as an ounce- and-a-half of liquor.

Myth: Someone who has had too much to drink will look intoxicated.

Fact: Someone's physical appearance can be misleading. One drink can impair someone's ability to drive. Judgment is the first thing affected when someone has been drinking and important motor skills are next.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

How do I approach one of my guests who has had too much to drink? I mean, I don't want to lose a friend.

The first time is the hardest, but your actions could save your friend's life or that of an innocent victim. Pull your guest

aside and politely, but firmly tell them that you cannot let them drive home because you care. Offer to let the guest spend the night, call a cab or ask another, sober guest to drive the intoxicated person home.

How will I be held responsible if one of my guests is involved in a crash?

The laws vary from state to state, but you could be held responsible for the costs associated with the crash including medical bills and property damage and be sued for emotional pain and suffering.

WHAT CAN I DO TO STOP DRUNK DRIVING?

◆ Support measures to strengthen drunk driving and victims' rights laws by contacting elected officials.

◆ Tie a [MADD ribbon](#) to a visible location on your vehicle as a symbol of your commitment to drive safe and sober during the holidays and as a sign for others to do the same.

◆ **Write letters to the editor of local newspapers expressing your concern over the drunk-driving problem in your community.**

◆ Get involved -- become a volunteer for your local MADD chapter.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SEE SOMEONE DRIVING DRUNK?

Report drunk drivers immediately to area law enforcement from a car phone or pay phone with the license plate number, description of the vehicle and the direction in which it was traveling.

How to Spot a Drunk Driver

These warning signs should be your signal to take down a license plate number and vehicle description to report to the proper authorities. Do not attempt to stop the vehicle.

- ◆ Wide turns
- ◆ Straddling lanes or driving on the center line
- ◆ Drifting or moving in a straight line at a slight angle to the roadway
- ◆ Driving with headlights off at night
- ◆ Appearing to be drunk (i.e., eye fixation, face close to windshield, drinking in the vehicle)
- ◆ Driving below the speed limit
- ◆ Erratic braking or stopping without cause
- ◆ Slow response to traffic signals (sudden stop, delayed start)
- ◆ Nearly striking an object, curb, etc.
- ◆ Weaving or zig-zagging across the road
- ◆ Driving on the wrong side of the road or completely off the roadway
- ◆ Tailgating
- ◆ Accelerating or decelerating rapidly

HOW TO REPORT A DRUNK DRIVER

Once connected with a law enforcement agency, provide them with following information:

- ◆ Tell them you wish to report a suspected drunk driver.
- ◆ Give exact location (identify road and direction) of the vehicle being driven erratically.
- ◆ Give a description of the vehicle such as model, color, license number, etc.
- ◆ Describe the manner in which the vehicle is being driven.

DO NOT

- ◆ Do not attempt to stop the vehicle.
- ◆ Do not attempt to follow if the vehicle is exceeding the posted speed limit or if any other hazard may exist due to following the vehicle.
- ◆ Do not disregard any traffic signals in an attempt to keep the drunk driver in view.

- ◆ Do not follow the drunk driver too closely, because he/she may stop suddenly.
- ◆ Do not get so engrossed in following the drunk driver that you begin weaving in the road with the drunk driver.
- ◆ Do not attempt to detain the drunk driver if he/she should stop.
- ◆ Do not attempt to act in the capacity of any police, fire or medical person unless you are properly trained and authorized to perform that function.
- ◆ Do not attempt to assist any law enforcement officer while he/she is apprehending a drunk driver, unless requested.

Holiday Entertaining


Increase The Odds Of Getting Your Guests Home Safely


By [Sandra Kinsler](#)


As the holiday season approaches, many people are planning parties and family gatherings. To help make Christmas and New Years celebrations both safe and fun here are some common-sense, responsible hosting tips that can help get your guests home safely by diminishing the number of people who will drive under the influence of alcohol.


As host(ess) of a party, you can be held legally responsible for injuries or damages that occur as a result of the alcohol you have served, even after your guests leave. You can reduce the risk to yourself and your guests by attempting to keep the drinking to a moderate level. Many things can be done to accomplish this but designating a bartender who will keep track of guests who may drink too much and help stop them in time to sober up before getting on the road is one of the best methods. Serving food with drinks and providing non-alcoholic beverages will help people stay sober as well.


Other ideas for socially responsible hosting include:


 Do not over-drink yourself. As the host(ess), you can stay on top of and avoid potential problems when you are able to think clearly and act quickly.


 Find out how guests will be going home from your party. Be prepared to take away car keys.


 Promote the use of designated drivers and encourage guests to leave their cars at home and take public transportation, cabs, or walk. Have cash and phone numbers ready for taxi companies. Some cab companies and other charitable organizations offer free rides to the public on holidays. Watch your local newspaper or television news station for lists of organizations offering the service.


 When your guests arrive by car, collect their car keys. That way, when they are ready to leave, you can give them a second opinion on whether they are sober enough to drive home by themselves.


 Stop serving alcohol at least one hour before the party is over. Make sure coffee, alcohol-free drinks and food are constantly available. However coffee and cold showers do not make a person sober -- they only moderate alcohol consumption. Only time allows the body to consume and rid itself of alcohol.

 Plan to deal with any guest who drinks too much. Before the party gets going, ask someone reliable to help you keep things under control.


 Mix and serve drinks yourself or designate a bartender instead of having an open bar. Avoid serving doubles and keep shot glasses, jiggers or self-measuring one-ounce bottle spouts handy to measure drinks. Guests are less likely to over-drink when standard measures are used.


 If you serve an alcoholic punch, use a non-carbonated base such as fruit juice. The body absorbs alcohol faster when mixed with carbonation.

 Be prepared for overnight guests. Have blankets and sleeping bags ready. The easiest way to keep a drunk off the road is to provide a place to sleep.


 Always serve food along with alcohol. It is always better to eat while drinking than to drink on an empty stomach. High protein and high carbohydrate foods like cheese, meats, veggies, breads and light dips are especially good. They taste great and do not make guests as thirsty as salty, sweet or greasy foods do.



 Do not force drinks on your guests or rush to refill their glasses when empty. Some guests may not wish to appear rude and will accept drinks they do not want. Make bottled water available.

 If you observe a guest drinking too much:

- engage him/her in conversation to slow down the drinking.
- offer high protein food like pizza, shrimp or spareribs.
- offer to make the next drink using less alcohol, mix it with a non-carbonated base or give no alcohol at all.

 Always have low-alcohol and alcohol-free drinks, such as coffee, pop, fruit punch, juice and water available. Many people will choose to drink water when they feel they have had too much to drink.



Do not plan physical activities when you serve alcohol. People are more prone to injury or mishap after drinking.

When The Party's Over



If one of your guests has been drinking and should not drive, please do not give back the car keys to prevent driving to and avoid harm. Maybe just a little persuasion from you could mean the difference between life and death.



Suggest that you or a sober friend drive your alcohol impaired friend home. The car can always be picked up at another time.



Suggest that your impaired friend stay overnight in your home. This may sound inconvenient, but you could be saving your friend's -- or someone else's-- life.



Have your friend taken home in a taxi. Pay for the ride yourself. It's hard to object to a free ride.



Whatever you do, do not give in. Friends do not let friends drink and then drive. In the morning, you will have a safer and maybe an even closer friend.



Remember this equation:

One drink = 5 oz. of 12 percent wine OR 12 oz. of 5 percent beer OR 1 1/2 oz. of liquor, and neither coffee nor a cold shower will help sober someone up. Only time can do that.